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THE EFFECT OF PARADIGMS ON MILITARY DECISION MAKING

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

THE EFFECT OF PARADIGMS ON MILITARY DECISION MAKING

The ultimate goal of planning and decision making is for planners and decision makers to develop an optimum plan and arrive at the best solution for a particular problem. No plan is perfect, however, in part because the decision making process is an activity precluded from total objectivity by human factors. One such factor is the profound influence of paradigms on decision makers. A leader's background--heritage, attitudes, customs, experience--permeates the planning and decision making process through acquired patterns of thinking. Planners can profit from a fundamental understanding of paradigms, their sources, and how they can influence perceptions of reality. Paradigms can serve as useful models, establishing boundaries that identify what behavior is acceptable, expected, and/or successful. However, as paradigms evolve it is difficult to determine whether the old paradigm parameters are useful or have lost their utility and become outdated. During a paradigm shift, rules are changing. Through an awareness of this metamorphosis, one can judge the wisdom of decisions. Failure to anticipate and understand the nature of paradigms and their influence in conflicts will impede decision making. Military leaders must be able to critically examine existing doctrine to determine if its rules have succumbed to inflexible and ineffective dogma. The concept of paradigms provides a means to analyze past experience, assess the current situation, and look to the future.

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The Effect of Paradigms on Military Decision Making

French experiences in the First World War had burned deep into the national psyche. By 1917 the prewar French belief in the power of the offensive had been exposed as a horrible delusion as a generation of Frenchmen were sacrificed to German machine guns...World War I was the formative experience for the French generals who rose through the army in peacetime and reached its summit in 1940, and they based all their predictions of future land warfare on it...When the German army struck, France was in the worst of all possible positions: losing faith in the established predictive paradigm, it had not yet replaced it with an alternative.¹

Military Misfortunes

Introduction

In successfully preparing for, conducting, and terminating war, leaders must demonstrate an understanding of their potential enemies and anticipate the nature of the war should deterrence or diplomacy fail to achieve a peaceful solution to the discord. The ultimate goal is for planners and decision makers to develop an optimum plan and arrive at the best solution for a particular problem. No plan is perfect, however, in part because the decision making process is an activity precluded from total objectivity by human factors. One such factor is the profound influence of paradigms on decision makers. A leader's background--heritage, attitudes, customs, experience--permeates the planning and decision making process through acquired patterns of thinking. As cited in the above quote, France's political and military leaders were not prepared to counter Germany's attack in 1940. France failed primarily because her leaders were mentally wedded to an outmoded paradigm modeled on their earlier experiences. Despite the world having witnessed Germany's drive through Poland and France's long-time adversarial interest in monitoring Germany's military, France was unable to successfully act on its knowledge. Unreceptive to change, the French military

steadfastly adhered to the old warfighting paradigm even though they had become increasingly aware of its shortcomings.

To analyze the effects of paradigms on military decision making, this paper will examine the decision making process, explore the role of organizational culture, and provide historical examples of these effects. Japan's strategic and operational decisions, surrounding war in the Pacific during World War II, will serve as the primary examples for examination. Historical examples will demonstrate the powerful effect of paradigms on decision making.

Paradigms

In order to analyze the effects of paradigms on decision making it is necessary to define the terms "rational decision making" and "paradigm." The following definitions will be used:

Naval War College Definition for Rational Decision Making: A structured decision process, where reasoning and evidence exist, and where value maximizing is the desired outcome.²

Paradigm: Joel Barker, a futurist, defines a paradigm as a set of rules and regulations (written or unwritten) that does two things: (1) it establishes or defines boundaries; and (2) it tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful.³ (It is worth noting a corollary to Barker's definition: actions outside an established paradigm boundary violate the rules of the existing order and will generally be discouraged.) He has identified representative subsets of the paradigm concept including: **principles, protocols, conventions, conventional wisdom, mind-sets,**

values, traditions, prejudices, ideology, rituals, doctrine, and dogma [emphasis added] ordered on his spectrum from challengeable to unchallengeable.

All people rely on paradigms to establish norms and provide parameters (codified or through tradition) for expected behavior. This positive application includes the identification of accepted behaviors and successful patterns for action within those parameters. Paradigms have negative application when they reinforce unrealistic or irrational tendencies such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudices, jingoism, and spiritualism as an underlying basis for action over non-emotional, objective criteria. Perhaps an even more negative consequence is when outdated, ineffective paradigms are followed because of failure to recognize that they have become so.

Paradigm Sources

Within the larger culture there are numerous paradigms governing areas ranging from accepted child-rearing practices to warfighting doctrine. Military decision makers primarily acquire paradigms from history, culture, and (because of intense socialization) the military organizational culture. Just as a new mother relies on her culture to guide her on major decisions such as the acceptability of infanticide or minor decisions surrounding breast feeding etiquette, military personnel rely on organizational directives, doctrine, and tradition for guidance. Thus, military personnel are able to function more smoothly once they have been acculturated into the military. Core values, procedures, and expectations are taught formally and by example, and are reinforced with the goal of producing a successful military member. Success is usually measured by the person's ability to follow established rules/ethics and produce expected results.

Military Decision Making

More Art Than Science. The military decision making process takes into account both subjective and objective factors with the aim of arriving at rational decisions through a rational process. Since the early twentieth century, the United States' military has attempted to objectively and effectively evaluate numerous influencing factors by using the Commander's Estimate of the Situation as the mechanism for data analysis, evaluation of alternatives, and selection of the best course of action. Military planners and decision makers, regardless of the methodology employed, universally seek to arrive at choices which ultimately lead to attainment of strategic goals.

As both an art and a science, decision making can be divided for evaluation accordingly. Science, as part of the decision making process, is more easily put through validity tests critical to arriving at the best decision. After thorough examination and understanding of the mission for which such data are to serve, logistical or other quantifiable data can be obtained and incorporated as Time Phased Force Deployment Data. However, this scientific process is inevitably influenced by human factors that are complex and less amenable to objective tests of validity. Throughout the process, as planners view data, each member is affected by his or her culture and experience, thereby bringing a different perspective and "baggage" to the process. Even "hard" data are viewed by humans through cultural filters, thereby injecting subjectivity into every phase of the planning process. Subjective interpretation and evaluation of data as well as the amount of necessary but non-quantifiable data, therefore, make planning and decision making more art than science. The subjective element that makes planning an art also provides the means by which individual and organizational paradigms influence

decision making. This is particularly the case in the absence of reliable data or during periods of stress, because at such times humans tend to fall back on their paradigms--those familiar patterns of thinking and behavior drawn from background and experience--to aid in decision making.

Knowing the Enemy. Knowing the enemy is the cornerstone of Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. During the assessment of enemy capabilities, enemy intent and other subjective determinations generally fall into the realm of assumptions unless there are explicit intelligence data to confirm the "what" and "why" surrounding enemy intent. For the operational commander, evidence of enemy intent can be vital in selecting a course of action. The Intelligence Estimate's accuracy can be correlated to the amount of correct enemy data in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of enemy centers of gravity, vulnerabilities, and strengths. This knowledge should go well beyond enemy order of battle and targets to include cultural characteristics that could affect enemy motivation and intent. Understanding an enemy's pattern of thinking through a search for their prevailing paradigms can provide information from which to anticipate enemy actions and develop operational and deception plans.

America's enemies have sought to exploit its vulnerabilities by observing its approach to war. The predominant manner in which the United States approaches war has been labeled the "American Way of War." The implicit rules for this paradigm of war emphasize the use of conventional methods and weapons, a focus on technology, and an aversion to possible U. S. casualties. The Viet Cong were able to use guerrilla warfare to frustrate General Westmoreland's search and destroy missions because the employment of firepower and mobility, inherent in American's primary warfighting

paradigm, were largely ineffective against the enemy's small unit operations. Strategic hamlets and other pacification efforts did not fit within paradigm boundaries accepted by most military leaders, especially senior officers in positions to influence strategic and operational decisions. At that time, only the Marines Corps' Small Wars Manual had incorporated, to any great extent, a doctrinal paradigm for counterinsurgency. Consequently, counterinsurgency was less acceptable and resources were diverted to conventional warfare operations.

Increasingly in the future, potential adversaries will likely hold views and follow rules of warfighting behavior that differ from those of the United States. With the increase in ethnic and religious conflicts, America will encounter non-Western paradigms which deviate significantly from ours. Failure to anticipate and understand the nature of paradigms and their influence in conflicts will impair decision making.

Perils of Paradigms

As previously noted, subjective factors play an important role in the decision making process. These factors can account for choices which are unrealistic and unsuitable to goal accomplishment being made after seemingly careful consideration. In an environment that is not conducive to objective thought, ineffective decisions are more likely to result. Since decision makers would not intentionally choose a course of action with failure as the likely outcome, bad luck or ill-fate are often offered as reasons for otherwise unexplained failure to achieve operational or strategic objectives. While fortune does play a role in the outcome of military affairs, a closer look at the circumstances will probably reveal a more plausible explanation for failure. Seeking such explanations, the authors of *Military Misfortunes* identified three basic kinds of

failure: failure to learn, failure to anticipate, and failure to adapt.⁴ Understanding paradigms, as the overarching factor affecting these failures, can provide insight into the decisions that contributed to the failures. The relationship between paradigms and France's failure to adapt before the German onslaught in May 1940 will be examined later.

Since the decision making process does not occur in a sterile, statistical environment, an examination of potential detracting human factors is helpful. Without a framework for such examination, the analysis would be overwhelmed by the myriad psychological and social variables which could potentially influence a decision maker's thought process. As previously mentioned, how the decision maker perceives the situation and behaves is dependent on his or her background. According to Vice Admiral Metcalf, "In examining the process of decision making in military operations, another important variable is the decision maker's background. But it is difficult to put the background of a commander into a computer or theoretical model."⁵ The concept of paradigms provides a model to examine that important variable and is a valuable analytical tool for decision makers, especially at the strategic and operational levels. Exploring paradigms can result in a better understanding of the enemy while providing insight into one's own self. Even so, selection of inappropriate ends as well as means can result when paradigms contribute to faulty decisions. Decision making can be enhanced by identifying influential paradigms that could detract from the end result of a rational decision.

Japanese Decision Making - Pacific War

Admiral Yamamoto, son of a school teacher with a samurai background,⁶ was the principal architect of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and was the driving force in determining Japan's maritime strategy. Admiral Yamamoto and the Japanese military were affected in their decision making by prevailing paradigms within the military organization. A review of Japan's militaristic culture in general and its military structure in particular will help to explain how various patterns and models for behavior developed and were factors that influenced decision making and behavior.

Japan's long history of samurai warriors under its feudal system produced a *bushido* creed paradigm comprised of militaristic traits ingrained in society even after the Meiji restoration in 1868. Replacing the feudal hierarchy of four classes--samurai, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants with the shogun at its summit--the new hierarchy consisted of the Imperial household, peers (former shoguns, lords, and samurai responsible for the restoration), and commoners (peasants, merchants, craftsmen, and former samurai).⁷ Now that military service was open to all regardless of status, the previously superior status of the samurai was open to a wider population of new *bushi* (warriors). The particularistic ethic of the samurai became the universalistic ethic of the entire male population through "samuraization."⁸ Japan's educational system reinforced samurai ideals throughout the elementary and secondary schools. Starting in 1925, active duty military officers were assigned to every school from the middle school level up (except girls' schools) and military training became part of the regular curriculum.⁹

The pervasive ideology of militarism instilled in Japan's subjects and future warfighters a paradigm of expected behaviors which included the virtuousness of dying for the Emperor, unquestioning loyalty, and a reluctance to criticize the government or the Emperor. The ancient Japanese saying, "Duty is heavy; death lighter than a feather," invokes the warrior spirit. Believed to be a descendant of the gods, the Emperor's divinity was testimony to his infallibility. How did militarism and the ideology of the emperor cult affect decision making? According to Japanese writer Kazuko Tsurumi, this intense socialization:

...created a taboo out of any rational and scientific way of thinking on matters that might have even slight relevance to the Emperor and the Emperor system. Since all major government policies were proclaimed and executed in the name of the Emperor, criticism of government policy automatically became criticism of the Emperor. The Meiji Constitution specified that war must be declared in the name of the Emperor. Thus by implication, to question war policy was tantamount to questioning the infallibility of the Emperor.

Thus, a decision making paradigm was formed that was exploited by lower echelon military officers who pushed their decisions into Imperial Conferences. Militaristic, parochial views found their way to approval in the very forum designed to bridge the gap between the powerful military leaders and the ineffectual civilian representatives. "The ostensible purpose of these proceedings was to inform the Emperor--who would normally sit quietly and not utter a single word--about the situation, so that after the Conference he could give his 'sanction,' thereby making the decision legal. The practical significance of the Imperial Conference was to make the decision binding on all, and very difficult to change at a later date."¹⁰

Japan's Paradigmatic World View

The most significant policy driving Japan's hegemonic actions during the pre-World War II period was Japan's intention of pursuing autarky through the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. After years of witnessing the West's colonialism, Japan's leaders arrived at decisions and pursued actions designed to bring freedom (in their view) to Asia by serving as Asia's emancipator and leader. Japan's ethnocentric belief in her moral superiority and her determination to halt opposition from outside powers revealed a "mind-set of ideology based on truths, half-truths, and empty space."¹¹ This mind-set served as motivation and as rationalization for their decisions regarding entry into the war. A fundamental paradigm underlying the Army's continental ambitions and conquests was Japan's ancient world view of "all eight corners of the world under one roof"¹² with Japan at the center of the universe. This long-held belief reinforced a pattern of thinking which justified Japanese hegemony. Their moral cause, tinged with racism, was for liberation from "white invasion and oppression."¹³ Cultural stereotyping led the Japanese to conclude that the West, and particularly Americans, were materialistic and did not have the moral fortitude to endure a prolonged war. John Dower chronicles the effects of American and Japanese prejudices through stereotyping and ethnocentrism in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, and contends that Japan did not develop an effective antisubmarine warfare capability based on its conclusion that Americans were too soft to endure the mental and physical strains of extended submarine duty. In describing their view of war, he refers to Japanese Army pamphlets that describe war as "the father of creation and mother of culture."

The decision for war, within Japanese paradigms, was a logical progression toward Japan's attainment of her rightful place in the world order. As the United States applied a diplomatic "tightening the screw" in response to Japanese aggression, Japanese leaders sought a military strategy aimed at the United States to achieve policy objectives of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Actions by the United States imposed obstacles to Japan's pursuit of "living space" and threatened what they perceived as their very survival. From this perspective, the decision for war can be viewed as rational. With Japanese policy objectives regarded as incompatible with those of United States, war appeared inevitable--despite a lack of Japanese industrial capacity for a prolonged war and the likelihood that its military would become over extended.

Military Organization

Paradigms exist in the military subculture in the form of agreed upon values, doctrine, and tradition. To meet challenges in the ever-changing warfare environment, the military structure must be responsive to change. Military leaders must be able to critically examine existing doctrine to determine if its rules have succumbed to inflexible and ineffective dogma. As history has shown, unwillingness to anticipate the future and adapt will likely lead to failure. The process of decision making takes place within a structure and environment that can either enhance or detract from effective and rational decisions. To better understand decisions, the decisions should be viewed in the context of the process, organizational structure, and organizational climate. The following historical overview includes these elements.

In the late 1800's Japan's Emperor became the supreme commander of the military with the Army and Navy General Staffs reporting directly to him on strategic and operational matters. Thus the military was not accountable to the Japanese government or to the people. The primacy of the military helped to ensure that its decisions would not be obstructed by the other two components of the Clausewitzian trinity. Without the government or the people to exert a restraining force upon the military, formulation of doctrine, strategic and operational decision making, and ultimately policy making resided primarily within the military. The power of the Japanese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister was usurped by the military. Even the Emperor's involvement was reduced to mostly asking pointed questions of military leaders but then failing to assert himself in the final decision making. The Emperor "...even scolded the Chiefs of Staff when they came to report the latest developments in military and naval matters, but he would never go so far as to tell the Chiefs of Staff what to do or what not to do."¹⁴ Army decision makers claimed rights of autonomous command in justifying their aggressive, *fait accompli* actions. While these provocative Army actions were taken according to their own rules of conduct and without Cabinet approval during the war with China, the majority of decisions were made by consensus at liaison and imperial conferences.

The Japanese tradition of establishing a consensus before any important decision was taken was instituted in the late 1800's under the principle of *sodan*, or group consultation.¹⁵ Its cultural etiology evolved "as a protective device for the emperor's counselors, a matter of survival in a harsh feudal society wherein the penalty for almost any breach of propriety was self-inflicted death. If an advisor...advocated a certain

policy and that policy failed, then the advisor was honor bound to commit *seppuku*.”¹⁶

This cultural paradigm, or pattern of decision making by consensus, could be expected to suppress individual opposition in the Japanese cultural environment of avoiding personal responsibility. Even though Admiral Yamamoto had consistently opposed war with the United States, he made only perfunctory objections before joining in a unanimous decision to approve the war.

The Japanese Army

As could be expected, the Army operated under a continentalist paradigm, focused on the Asian mainland, and competed with the Navy to influence selection of Japan's strategic objectives. The Army favored courses of action on the continent directed at Manchuria, China, and Russia that would benefit their service in terms of manpower and resources. The Army's actions fit within the larger Japanese world view of bringing those Asian peoples into their rightful place within the Sphere while acquiring additional territory for its people. However, Army focus came into conflict with Navy focus when Japan began to assess the United States as its number one adversary, further dividing services already filled with antipathy. At the same time, Japan's strategic and operational objectives would be constrained by the Army's commitments on mainland Asia. The Army's approval for the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Midway is understandable given the nature of those operations and their reliance on primarily naval assets.

Japan lacked a strategic vision after Pearl Harbor and its initial tactical successes in the first six months of the war. Decisions regarding a move into the Indian Ocean area or toward Australia during planning for the second phase of operations were met

with Army resistance because of the number of divisions that might be required for any major operations. Mistrust, jealousy, and service rivalries characterized the relationship between the Japanese Army and Navy. For the most part, the services lacked the inclination to cooperate or even to communicate their plans. The Imperial General Headquarters, although invested with the responsibility of deciding strategic objectives put forth by the General Staffs, failed to insure unity of effort. Nor did the operational command structure allow for unity of command.

The Japanese Navy

Japanese naval doctrine was in large part shaped by Japan's historical naval events and prevailing Mahanian doctrine centered on decisive naval battles. The Battle of Tsushima during the 1904/5 Russo-Japanese War was still fresh in leaders' memories. Russia, a world power (like Japan's newest adversary, the United States), had been unexpectedly defeated in a brief, yet decisive naval battle. Since Japan's escape from Kublai Khan's forces in the thirteen century by a "divine wind" (*kamikaze*), spiritualism had become an integral part of Japanese thinking as she approached war. Admiral Togo, who commanded the Japanese fleet at the Battle of Tsushima, believed that "the souls of Japanese defenders who had died in those straits, seven centuries before, would fight beside him and ensure victory."¹⁷ Serving in the fleet at the Battle of Tsushima was a young naval officer, Isoroku Yamamoto. Admiral Yamamoto's decision for a similar preemptive plan of attack thirty-seven years later received support from War Minister Tojo, who placed faith in Japan's ability to prosecute the upcoming war. Relying on faith, he sidestepped the predicted and the actual results of preparatory war games. Japanese officials cast aside basic questions about Japan's preparedness for

war while Tojo dismissed war game results favoring the United States by claiming that one variable had not been considered--the unexpected.¹⁸ Clausewitz' concept of fog/friction in war, it seemed, would work only to Japan's advantage in the forthcoming war.

The Pearl Harbor attack was a high-risk venture, that fit the historical paradigm of Japanese naval success. Admiral Yamamoto's plan for the attack had been opposed by the Naval General Staff and Admiral Nagumo who would lead the operation. Yamamoto received consensus approval for the attack only after threatening to quit as Commander of the Combined Fleet.¹⁹ Since Pearl Harbor did not bring the decisive result Yamamoto intended, he turned his planning to Midway in hopes of a decisive naval battle which would bring the United States to the negotiating table.

Although Nagumo's First Air Division had demonstrated the destructive firepower from a carrier air force, Yamamoto's operational design for Midway held to outmoded Japanese doctrine which regarded battleships as the capital ships. This is particularly intriguing given that Yamamoto had been a proponent of naval air. Japanese naval doctrine relied on a war of attrition against the United States that envisioned the attack of U. S. warships transiting the Central Pacific en route to Japan. Japanese submarines, cruisers, and carriers were to flank and cause attrition of her enemy's forces which could then be crushed in a decisive, Mahanian naval battle by her main force of battleships. The Japanese disposition of forces at Midway reflected this doctrine with the battleships designated as the main body of the fleet.

Admiral Yamamoto was caught between paradigmatic doctrines involving employment rules for aircraft carriers and battleships. In the pre-war period Yamamoto

had advocated building more carriers and had expressed a belief that giant battleships were no longer Japan's capital ships, as evidenced by the following quote attributed to him: "These battleships will be as useful to Japan in modern warfare as a samurai sword!"²⁰ As Vice Minister of the Navy in 1936, he opposed admirals favoring battleships and commented, "Like elaborate, religious scrolls which old people hang up in their homes, they are of no proved worth. They are primarily a matter of faith, not reality."²¹

The conflict between battleship and carrier doctrine illustrates the influence of paradigms on "failure to adapt." New technology is frequently the catalyst for a subsequent change in doctrine. The shift to the new paradigm is generally slow and often rife with conflict between those who cling to previously successful paradigms while innovators seek new ways to employ emerging technology. Caught in the transition to an evolving paradigm whose air doctrine had not yet matured, Yamamoto's actions were not in consonance with his statements. His statements and his actions, however, can be reconciled given that both the United States and Japan were in the midst of learning new carrier rules. Yamamoto's employment of forces can be explained by the powerful paradigmatic influence of his experience at the Battle of Tsushima and existing Japanese naval doctrine. It can be argued that the United States was in a better position to further shift paradigms because of the catastrophic loss of battleships at Pearl Harbor. Nagumo's cautiousness in failing to seek out American carriers resulted in a heavier U. S. reliance on carriers after Pearl Harbor.

Yamamoto strongly held to the Japanese paradigm surrounding the value of honor. Although Yamamoto did not have confidence in Nagumo before or after Pearl

Harbor, Yamamoto disagreed with his operations officer (Admiral Kuroshima) who recommended transferring Nagumo. As previously discussed, Yamamoto was the son of a school master and former samurai; Nagumo was the son of an aristocrat.

Yamamoto's decision to retain Nagumo was based upon the cultural paradigm of expected behavior when disgraced--he felt that Nagumo was "an old fashioned samurai type" who would feel disgraced and commit suicide.²²

The Doolittle raid on Japan's homeland in April 1942 prompted leaders opposed to the Midway operation to acquiesce to Yamamoto's plan. Security of the homelands was the central responsibility of the Navy.²³ Yamamoto hastily prepared for the Midway operation in an effort to provoke a decisive battle and thus prevent further violations on Japan's sacred territory. He was reported to have been obsessed with protection of the Imperial City as evidenced by his regular reviews of weather reports for forecasts that would be unfavorable to aircraft bombing missions. In his haste, Yamamoto elected to proceed with his timetable for Midway rather than await repair of an additional carrier or provide much needed crew rest. Even though the Japanese Navy lacked accurate intelligence on the location and number of operational U. S. carriers in the Pacific, they were confident (despite indications to the contrary) that their communications remained secure and continued to rely on surprise. In the face of uncertainty caused by the lack of intelligence data on U. S. carrier forces, and pressed (he felt) to bring the United States to the negotiating table early, Yamamoto acted within the boundary of the existing doctrinal paradigm.

Yamamoto's decision to go into the Midway operation on board the Yamato has been rightfully criticized because of the detrimental consequences--a decision based on

tradition. While Admiral Nimitz was able to exercise operational command and control from his Pearl Harbor headquarters, Yamamoto was precluded from vital communications with his force because of radio silence. His inability to communicate with Nagumo and the carriers, coupled with the Yamato's positioning away from carrier action, precluded his control or effectiveness during the operation. This decision can be attributed to the "Japanese outworn tradition that a CinC's duty was to be in battle." ²⁴

Admiral Yamamoto is an enigma in the study of Japan's actions during the Pacific war. As Commander of the Combined Fleet, his responsibility was to guide the Navy based on the best courses of action. Once the decision for war had been made, he was committed to fulfilling Japan's policy although he believed success would have to come early. While assigned as Japan's naval attaché in Washington, D. C. he had been partially acculturated into the ways of American life, beliefs, and institutions. His empirical observations would come into stark contrast with Japanese prejudices and stereotypes of Americans. In a speech to middle school children he stated that it was a mistake to think of Americans as weak with a "shallow culture."²⁵ He faced a similar dilemma when he dealt with senior admirals. In an effort to temper their views, Yamamoto cautioned them "against blind belief in Japan's invincibility"²⁶-- a caution that leaders did not heed.

France's Defeat in 1940

France's rapid six-week fall stunned the world. A major reason for France's defeat can be attributed to effects of paradigms that resulted in her being unprepared for war. These paradigms centered around France's experiences in World War I. After the war,

Germany took the opportunity to learn from its defeat. Germany developed the *Blitzkrieg* in response to the stalemates of trench warfare and had refined air and ground operations, coupling them with speed and maneuver. The French high command, however, had “aged gracefully, drawing comfort and security from its successes in 1918.”²⁷ Colonel Charles De Gaulle proved to be what futurist Joel Barker calls a “paradigm pioneer,” while the Germans can be categorized as “paradigm shifters.” According to Barker, “It is paradigm pioneers who are first to follow the rough pathway that paradigm shifters have uncovered.” Therefore, although the Germans were the innovators for the modern warfighting doctrine, De Gaulle attempted to capitalize on the paradigm. He advocated that French tanks be gathered into armored divisions and that France adopt a system of military organization more akin to the Germans.²⁸ Although De Gaulle’s vision met with resistance, changes in doctrine were underway. In military doctrine, however, time can be the enemy for the side lagging behind new developments during a paradigm shift.

In France’s case it is also important to reiterate that in the absence of reliable enemy data or when under stress, humans will tend to fall back on paradigms from their background and experience. As noted in *Military Misfortunes*:

When the campaign in France is considered in light of the dominant prewar doctrines that had shaped the French army it is possible to see how strongly these preconceived ideas influenced the actions of men who were getting little or no clear guidance from the high command...Mistakes...were repeated many times as French commanders reacted to the unexpected by turning for succor to a doctrine that had deprived them of their reflexes.²⁹

France fell victim to an enemy who had institutionalized visionary warfighting thinking, via the German General Staff concept of organization, and had transformed new warfare concepts into doctrine.

Another limiting factor in France's perception of the situation was the misguided belief in its superior abilities. Just as the Japanese had chosen to ignore war game results, France's ethnocentric bias affected its war gaming. "War games were designed and conducted to show the superiority of the French army over the Wehrmacht and the likelihood that the French would suffer anything resembling the Polish defeat was explained away on the grounds that the defeated always exaggerated anyway, that the Poles were brave but badly led, and that they had the misfortune to live in a country that lacked natural frontiers."³⁰ France's confidence was not based upon a valid assessment of its strengths against Germany's employment of modern warfare. Even when faced with empirical evidence of the changing nature of warfare, France placed undue faith in its allegiance to defensive warfare concepts. During the inter-war period, Army proposals for future war preparations centered on the expectation that the next war would be similar to World War I, as indicated by Colonel Fabry's statement that what was necessary was "less a matter of innovating than of perfecting" existing practices.³¹ The United States would fall victim to this same fallacy of thought in Vietnam. Rather than learn from France's experiences with the Viet Minh, American military leaders approached the war convinced that by doing essentially the same thing, only bigger and better, that the United States could succeed where France failed. As these historical examples have shown, "...Ethnocentric ideas can lead, as we have seen, to a disparaging of the defeated party and the barrier to change..."³² Belief in one's innate superiority can have a blinding effect on objectivity.

Conclusion

Paradigms can have a profound effect on decision making. In order to optimize the decision making process, planners can profit from a fundamental understanding of paradigms, their sources, and how they can influence our perceptions of reality. With this knowledge military leaders, including operational commanders, can evaluate the organizational structure, decision making environment, and decision making process to determine if effective decisions will be the likely output.

Assessing enemy intent is tantamount to “getting inside the enemy’s head.” Identifying enemy paradigms can assist with an assessment of the enemy to gain insight into prevailing patterns of thought, beliefs, or values that may influence their behavior. Intelligence analysts can benefit by using paradigms as an analytical tool to help in the search for data and in the interpretation of data.

Paradigms can serve as useful models, establishing boundaries that identify what behavior is acceptable, expected, and/or successful. However, as paradigms evolve it is difficult to determine whether the old paradigm parameters are useful or have lost their utility and become outdated. During a paradigm shift, rules are changing. Through an awareness of this metamorphosis, one can judge the wisdom of decisions.

The demise of the Soviet Union in 1989 brought with it great change. The end of the Cold War and implosion of a superpower swept away existing patterns of viewing the world and the primary threat to the United States. During the bi-polar world era, America developed and refined policies and strategies to counter the potential threat. The subsequent, transitional period has caused some political and military leaders to appear nostalgic, yearning for earlier times when it was “easier” to know the enemy.

The emerging era is filled with uncertainty, new challenges, changing rules and boundaries. What will be America's role in any new world order, collective security, military operations other than war, and a host of issues that will affect how the military organizes, trains, and employs forces?

The dynamics of warfare demand that one learn from previous experience or be doomed to repeat history. No matter how beneficial, retrospective analysis is not enough. The military needs visionary thinkers who are able to anticipate the future. The concept of paradigms provides a means to analyze past experience, assess the current situation, and look to the future.

NOTES

¹ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War (New York: The Free Press, 1990), pp. 214-216.

² Stephen O. Fought, Introduction to the Rational Decision Making Course (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, March 1994), p. 1.

³ Joel Arthur Barker, Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future (New York: Harper Business, 1992), p. 32, 35, 36.

⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵ Joseph Metcalf III, "Decision Making and the Grenada Operation," in Ambiguity and Command: Organizational Perspectives on Military Decision Making ed. James G. March and Roger Weissinger-Baylon (New York: Harper Business, 1986), p. 278.

⁶ Carroll V. Glines, Attack on Yamamoto (New York: Crown Publisher, Inc., 1990), p. 41.

⁷ Kazuko Tsurumi, Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 82.

⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁹ Saburo Ienaga, The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931 - 1945 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 28.

¹⁰ Nobutaka Ike, Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. xvii.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹² Edwin P. Hoyt, Japan's War: The Great Pacific Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1986), p. 1.

¹³ John Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. xviii.

¹⁵ Hoyt, Japan's War: The Great Pacific Conflict, p. 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷ John Deane Potter, Admiral of the Pacific: The Life of Yamamoto (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965), p. 12.

¹⁸ Theodore Cook, "The Far Eastern Crisis," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 29 September 1994.

¹⁹ Edwin P. Hoyt, Three Military Leaders: Heidachi Tojo, Isoroku Yamamoto, Tomoyuki Yamashita (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993), p. 107.

²⁰ Potter, p. 30.

²¹ Glines, p. 48.

²² Potter, p. 123.

²³ H. P. Wilmott, Barrier and the Javelin: Japanese and Allied Strategies February to June 1942 (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 1981), p. 50.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁵ Potter, p. 44.

²⁶ Potter, p. 42.

²⁷ Cohen and Gooch, p. 200.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 215.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 224.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 211.

³¹ Ibid., p. 214.

³² Ibid., p. 213.

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